





Ecce Homo



“ECCE HOMO”

AND

ITS DETRACTORS:

A REVIEW.

BY

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“ECCE HOMO.”

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AMONG all the aberrations and distortions of modern theological thought there is no symptom more profoundly significant than the ever-increasing importance which is assigned therein to Christ. Various apprehended, and still more variously stated, His person, character, and work form at once the starting-point of conflicts the most bitter, and the meeting-point of tendencies the most opposite; the cause of war and the source of peace. Taking their stand upon the life and teaching of Christ as their basis, believers elaborate their systems and build up their bulwarks, most diverse in character and form, yet professing each and all to be but necessary and natural developments of that one central germ. Putting revelation altogether on one side, and reasoning out from their own intellects and hearts schemes of religion and philosophy the most opposed and mutually incompatible, independent thinkers have recognized in Christ the highest exemplification of their ideal, the noblest propounder of their deepest thoughts. Baffled and confused in the vain attempt to solve by reason the great mysterious problems of the existence, character, and destiny of the human race, appalled by the incongruities and seeming antagonism to right, which meet them on every hand, weary and despairing souls have found in the contemplation of Christ, His life and death and exaltation, the clue to unravel much that before appeared hid in hopeless obscurity, the ground for trust in the final unravelment of all. And ever as doubt becomes more earnest, investigation more searching, and theology more profound, this all-surpassing prominence of Christ becomes more deeply felt, more plainly visible. No stronger testimony to the truth of Christianity can we conceive. Its ideal form may have been marred by sin and weakness, its Divine original may be obscured beneath a load of

human additions, or be barely recognizable through the warping influence of human perversions; still there it is, living, free and powerful as ever, triumphing over obstacles apparently the most insuperable, making its influence felt where least expected; and still in every case, not as a mere abstract scheme of dogmas or code of precepts, but as a living whole bound up and centralized in a single person. We say again, what stronger proof can we have than this, that the essence of Christianity is truth, the profoundest and divinest that human mind can grasp, and that this truth is summed up in Christ? What surer indication that the great need of the times, the true Eirenicon, which alone can lay the storm of party strife, and bring the present jarring and discordant elements of thought to rest and peace, is a wider and more comprehensive view of the fulness, the many-sidedness of Christ? To narrow and one-sided views of Christ may almost every error that has torn the Christian Church asunder be ascribed; by larger, deeper views alone can the breaches be healed and living unity restored.

But how to attain these views? The common run of theologians are far too closely wedded to the particular notions of their own schools (which they would fain have regarded as truth absolute and entire) to be even aware of their essential narrowness. With them to doubt is criminal, to differ heretical, to seek a larger and deeper grasp of truth presumptuous and latitudinarian; how can they ever, then, be expected to attain to it themselves? The sceptic and the rationalist are in their way still narrower, holding less of truth, and that less firmly, than their orthodox opponents; useful in pulling down mere human forms, and encrustations of error, but, alas, in the majority of cases utterly without care or discernment for the spirit that lived within;—what possibility of really comprehensive views from such as these? The eclectic, who with well-balanced mind and cautious care weighs each several detail of opposing systems, extracts from each its element of truth, and slowly pieces them together, though he may do much by way of preparation and assistance in the great cause, is commonly far too cold and calculating in his comprehensiveness to have that living force and power of suasion, which is needed to be effective. There remains but one class really competent to meet this special exigency of the times,—those who having in their own persons undergone the terrible ferment of doubt and conflict which now-a-days besets a reasonable faith, having been tossed, it may be, by opposing winds of doctrine this way and that, have yet manfully struggled on, neither timorously stifling their doubts by throwing themselves blindly into the arms of any party, nor despairingly giving doubt the rein and sinking into careless pyrrhonism, but fighting their way bravely through have attained *His* side, and listened to *His* voice, who is

above the fierce waterfloods, a King for ever; have gazed on Him, not as theologians have painted Him, but as He is Himself; have drunk in His words, not as commentators have interpreted them, but in their primitive simplicity and force; and so in His strength have risen conquerors in the strife, and attained at last the precious fruit which none but they can ever reach—a breadth of view, a living hold of Christ and truth, which raises them far above all party contests; a keen and lively sympathy with every phase of mental doubt, which gives them influential power and aptness in its treatment. These are the master spirits of the age, few indeed in number, but of the noblest mould; and among these must assuredly be ranked the author of the work whose title heads the present paper, ‘*Ecce Homo*.’ Who he is we know not; this only we know, which he has told us in his preface, that being ‘dissatisfied with the current conceptions of Christ,’ having read ‘many books on Christ’ yet still failing to obtain what his soul yearned for—a clear comprehension of His ‘motives, objects, and feelings,’—he was ‘obliged to reconsider the whole subject from the beginning,’ to place himself in imagination at the time of the commencement of Christ’s public life, and so ‘trace out His biography from point to point,’ accepting ‘those conclusions about Him, not which church doctors or even apostles have sealed with their authority, but which the facts themselves, critically weighed, appear to warrant.’ To many, no doubt, as he says, such a course will seem ‘audacious and perilous;’ to himself it is plain from the whole tone of the book, and especially the warmth of enthusiasm with which it breathes throughout, this investigation has been the source of the deepest and truest satisfaction; to others its results cannot but be, judged by the instalment already published, of the most inestimable benefit. The author of ‘*Ecce Homo*’ is in fact one of those who, as he himself describes it, having made an ‘independent search for truth,’ full of ‘hazards and difficulties’ as such a search necessarily is, have brought back ‘glorious spoils for those who remained at home.’ Before, however, dwelling at length on these tangible fruits of the writer’s victory over doubt, it will be well briefly to review some of the more notable of those difficulties which beset his path, and the way in which he has grappled with and overcome them.

In the first place, then, our author had to encounter at the very outset of his investigation the doubts occasioned by *criticism*. He desired to go back to the original records of Christ’s life, and learn from them the real nature of His work,—the purpose which He had in view, and the means which He employed for its accomplishment. But how was this to be done? These very records were disputed, both as to genuineness and authenticity; how, then, could any certain conclusion be based upon them? According to one set of critics St Luke’s biography

conveyed the truest picture of Christ; according to another St John's. Here were some who held the Gospel narrative to be authentic contemporaneous history even to its minutest details; here were others who regarded it as fundamentally true, but containing some exaggerations and embellishments of later times; and yet others who viewed it as entirely legendary or mythical. It was plain that, before any progress could be made in the proper subject of inquiry, this preliminary question must first be settled:—on what basis is it to proceed? The facts must first be 'critically weighed' before any conclusions could be deduced from them which might be accepted as certainly true. Now this preparatory step the author of 'Ecce Homo' seems at first sight very much to have overlooked. True, he recognizes its necessity by a brief allusion in his preface; but in the book at large there is observable practically, it has been said, 'a total absence of the critical faculty to which he lays claim.' His conclusions, we are told, are 'based upon an arbitrary selection of documents,' and can hence 'afford no satisfaction to reflecting minds;' upon the authenticity of St John's Gospel he bestows not 'a single argument,' and yet now 'quotes it alone in support of his notions,' now 'treats it as if it was of dubious authenticity;' and so with other matters. These are grave charges, implying apparently that this first step in his inquiry had either not been taken at all, or else taken very hastily and insufficiently. Without commenting on the glaring unfairness of the attempt to construe the passing mention of 'critical weighing' in the preface, into a 'claim' for 'critical faculty' in the work itself, we cannot, however, but think that these charges of critical weakness—charges, it is to be noticed, urged alike by orthodox and extreme sceptics—have their origin in an essential misunderstanding of the author's plan. Two courses plainly were open to him in this matter; either he might enter at large into the discussion of the authenticity and genuineness of the Gospels,—and if he entered into it at all it must be at large,—and then ground on the results thus obtained his further researches; or he might proceed at once to these, merely taking care to avoid the use of such portions or such aspects of the Gospels as foundations, which were especially exposed to attack, which were generally considered dubious, or which he felt himself unable successfully to defend. Had he chosen the first method his book would have been necessarily limited in its influence to professed students and scholars, and that vast circle of anxious and perplexed souls, who hear the results of criticism but lack time or opportunity to understand and weigh its details, and who more especially need such instruction and consolation as this book affords,—these would never have been reached at all. Bravely facing, therefore, the certain consequences of unjust accusation and contemptuous scorn on the part of opposing critics, who could not appreciate a method

so diverse from their own, the author of 'Ecce Homo' chose the second course, of *respecting* critical doubts but not *discussing* them. Hence his cautious tone in regard to miracles, insisting on the reality of the belief in them, both on the part of disciples and enemies, which no one can dispute; but waiving for the present the question of their reality as actual facts. Hence, too, his careful avoidance of the fourth Gospel as a basis of argument, which yet he freely uses by way of illustration; his doubtful language concerning the miraculous circumstances attendant on Christ's baptism and temptation; his preference for general facts over particular; his exclusion of Apostolic testimony as evidence; and so on. Relying upon English common-sense unhesitatingly to reject all such intrinsically absurd theories as those of the legendary or mythical character of Gospel history, he was well aware that, with respect to many of the details of that history, and especially its miracles, grave doubts were largely prevalent among all classes of intelligent men; that with respect to St John's Gospel, again, the difference in tone between it and the others, involving apparently no less difference in doctrine, was so patent to the most superficial observer that it would be unsafe to insist upon its evidence in the present stage of the inquiry except upon a full discussion of its claims, and explanation of its peculiarities; and that hence on all these points he must, if he would carry his readers with him, for the time concede the objections as possibly valid, and build exclusively upon those portions and those aspects of the Evangelic narrative which the vast majority at all events of those for whom his book was intended would admit to be irrefragably true. At the same time he lets us see pretty plainly, every here and there, that these doubts are not his own, that he has himself no objection to these grounds of evidence which for the sake of others he at present abstains from using; nay rather, that he looks forward to the removal of such objections, the solution of such doubts, as one of the results to be expected from his investigation. Instead of, in fact, like most orthodox advocates, proceeding at once to the debateable ground between the sceptic and believer, and battling over it inch by inch, he takes the sceptic on his own ground, or rather the ground which is common to him and the believer, and by showing him how much is involved in this which he *does* believe leads him to look at that debateable matter from a new stand point, a loftier height, whence its congruity and harmony may be perceived. In other words, instead of hewing fiercely at the branches, he silently cuts away the root; without doubt the most effective, if apparently the less thorough, method.

Critical difficulties are, however, very far from being the most serious in the way of an investigator of Christ's life and work. Granted, that he has obtained a clear and settled conviction as to the truth, perfect or partial, of the Gospel history; he has yet to

inquire what the inward meaning of that history is, to apprehend it in its living reality, freed from all those encrustations of man's device which have gathered round it in the lapse of ages; a matter far more difficult, and requiring far higher qualities of mind than mere criticism of the letter. As the author of 'Ecce Homo' well reminds us,

"The remoteness of the life of Christ creates much difficulty in ascertaining the meaning of the words He used, and the exact nature of the doctrines He taught. For those words and those doctrines have been subjected to the ingenuity of many generations of commentators. Spoken originally to men of the ancient world, they have received a succession of mediæval and modern glosses, and if we put these aside and study the text for ourselves, our own training, the education and habits of the nineteenth century, disqualify us in a considerable degree from entering into its meaning. Only a well-trained historical imagination, active and yet calm, is competent so to revive the circumstances of place and time in which the words were delivered as to draw from them, at a distance of eighteen hundred years, a meeting tolerably like that which they conveyed to those who heard them."—(P. 75.)

Now if there be one thing more than another which Biblical criticism owes to Rationalism, it is the principle of *historical interpretation*, the necessity of going back to the times and circumstances when words were spoken, and deeds done, to understand their proper meaning. No doubt rationalists have been at times disposed to push this principle too far, and maintain that no other or deeper meaning is ever to be given to words than that which was distinctly apprehended by those who used or heard them; a proposition which is directly contradicted by the avowedly mysterious character of much of our Lord's and the Prophets' teaching, and the certain misunderstanding which they at times experienced. Still the principle remains true, that as a general rule all interpretation of Scripture must be based upon, or rise naturally out of, this primary and historical sense; and that whatever is not related to this is arbitrary and fanciful. To arrive at this original sense is clearly, then, the very first object of the sound expositor. We need scarcely add that it is an object which the author of 'Ecce Homo' has fully realized the importance of, and set himself most earnestly to attain. What aspect the words and deeds of Christ wear to us, who look back upon them from the stand-point of their results, and with the light of subsequent inspired teaching shining full upon them—this he at present puts aside as irrelevant. His question is: what aspect did they wear to those who first came in contact with them, and to whom they were most intimately related?

One would have thought that such an inquiry would have been hailed with delight by every sincere believer. To be transported back in imagination to the very time when Christ lived, to view Him as those viewed Him among whom He walked, to listen to His words as those listened who first heard them, to mingle

with Apostles and Evangelists, and learn to love Him and believe in Him, even as they did ; to see His plan gradually unfold itself, and study its several parts in the order and the manner in which He thought good to reveal them ; what more edifying or refreshing occupation ? what better standard by which to try our systematic theology and morality, and show that it indeed deserves the name of Christian, being grounded firmly in every particular on His teaching and His work, differing in nothing but its greater development in form and letter ? Yet from such inquiries how many shrink back timorously as if they were afraid of the result ! Can it be that the so-called orthodox are dimly conscious that if tried by this standard their systems would be found incongruous and un-Christian ? Are they tacitly aware that they are laying stress upon dogmas and precepts on which Christ laid no stress, and neglecting those on which He did ? Or do they, after all, secretly endorse the rationalist doctrine, which they are so forward openly to denounce, that the Christian faith is not the work of Christ, but of Paul and the other Apostles ? It seems hard to conclude that this is really the case ; and yet how else are we to explain the fact, that all such inquiries into the really primitive character of Christianity are carefully avoided by these 'reverend minds,' these 'religious men,' and when attempted by others are sure to bring down the charges of 'pretension,' 'rashness,' and 'presumption' ? Be this as it may, however, it is certain that in no other way than this of going back to the actual words and deeds of Christ, considered in their relation to the circumstances and feelings of the time, can that reasonable and living view of His work and teaching be attained which alone can satisfy the honest, conscientious doubter.

No doubt the truth of Christ has relations also, and those exceedingly important, to other circumstances and other states of feeling, and has been applied and developed in regard to these, from time to time, by men embued with the spirit of Christ, in a way most necessary to be studied by those who desire to comprehend it thoroughly and use it efficiently. Nay, it might seem as if some of these later relations and developments were really more important to us than this is to the Jews ; for example, the application of Christian truth to Gentile character and Gentile circumstances by St Paul, which might appear the most adapted to our needs ; a feeling which, consciously or unconsciously, has no doubt contributed not a little to that supremacy of St Paul in western theology which has been so often noticed. Plausible, however, as this idea may seem at first sight, a little consideration shows it to be really unsound. To the Jews was the Gospel first preached, not to the Gentiles ; for its reception they had been prepared and trained by a long course of providential discipline and inspired teaching ; for them it was primarily designed, and through them it was to spread to the world at

large. It is manifest, then, that in God's mind this first development of truth in relation to the Jews held a more important place than any subsequent ones ; that, especially, as these Jews were intended by Him to be the channels through which the Gospel was to flow to all nations, He must have regarded them as of all people most fitted to receive that Gospel in its many-sided fulness, who should thus be able to minister to the special needs of others, however diverse ; that clearly, therefore, in the teaching of the Gospel to the Jews must we expect the truest and most comprehensive view of truth. Nor is this all ; in this Jewish development alone have we the earlier stages of the process fully portrayed. Of the method employed by St Paul and others in the conversion and first instruction of Gentiles, we have but slight, and that mostly indirect, information ; the Epistles preserved by the early Church being invariably those which were addressed to believers of some standing, and so exclusively concerned with later stages of development, the building up in the faith, not the foundation. In taking the Epistles as our chief guides to the understanding of Christian truth, therefore, we are running the risk of overlooking this foundation, these first steps in progress, which, for the special purpose here supposed to be in view, are plainly of the most pre-eminent importance. While, lastly, it is to be remembered, that whereas, in respect to all later developments, the agents were ordinary imperfect men, endowed indeed with special gifts and supernatural guidance, but still showing in every word and action their peculiar idiosyncracies, and thus to a certain extent colouring their work with their own individual characteristics ; in this primary development alone the agent was One who perfectly reflected the mind and will of the Sender, and so perfectly exhibited the truth both in His deeds and teaching. Thus on every ground it is plain that he who would gain an accurate and living apprehension of Christ's work must begin by a thorough investigation into the facts of His life and doctrines, as recorded in the Gospels, as connected therefore essentially, and for the time being exclusively, with the circumstances and feelings of the Jews then living in Palestine. Not until this is done can the inquirer proceed to other and newer relations.

Now to arrive at this contemporary view of Christ two things are necessary. In the first place, all now existing ideas concerning Him, His person, His character, His object, must be resolutely put on one side, and kept out of sight. Every man will find what he looks for, and will overlook what he does not wish to see ; and so whoever goes to the Gospel history with his mind made up on any matter concerning it will doubtless find confirmation for his opinion there, and will not find anything opposed to it ; he is simply colour-blind. To really learn he must first of all empty himself of these preconceived notions, however sure

he may be of their truth, and be content to believe nothing but what he finds plainly and distinctly taught. But, in the second place, it is not enough merely thus to *divest* himself of all present feelings and predilections, he must further *invest* himself with the feelings and predilections of those who lived in Christ's days; he must realize their anticipations, their hopes, their wishes, that he may be able to ascertain the true character of Christ's promises and offers; he must put himself in their position morally, feel as they felt about laws and customs, have as it were their conscience, their failings even, that he may appreciate aright the change involved in Christ's legislation; and so on. The neglect of one or other of these essentials has been the source of nearly all the error and misapprehension to which the Gospel history has given occasion. Men will not be simply learners when they study Scripture, or they will not so master its language as to be free from danger of mistake; and thus it has come to pass that this, the simplest of all books, has been of all books the most misunderstood.

In the author of 'Ecce Homo' we have one who has fulfilled these two conditions to a very remarkable degree; who has put aside existing ideas, and been content to learn; who has realized the circumstances and feelings of the time, and so has rightly appreciated. Not that he has done this in any formal way. We have no scholastic treatise (most valuable in its place) on the state of the Jewish nation at the time of our Lord's appearance in its midst; no elaborate renunciation of dogmatic views; but at once, when we open the first page, something, we know not what, has wafted us suddenly into a new land, we feel ourselves no longer among barren names and words, but among living men concerned with living truths, men very unlike indeed to us, but yet so living that for the time we lose all consciousness of ourselves, and are as one of them. The novel aspect which things long thought to be perfectly familiar wear, when thus looked at with other eyes, may for a moment startle, but an instant's reflection, a turn to the original, suffices to assure the candid reader that the fault is not the writer's but his own, now first he sees things as they really were. Of course it is easy for malignant critics to pooh-pooh or misrepresent all this, to speak of it as an 'affectation of originality,' involving no real novelty except 'rash assertions, mistaken principles, and bad taste,' to describe the entire book as 'inaccurate, superficial, and unsound,' to visit it with their 'severest censure,' and in fact regard it as quite beneath their notice but for the 'thoughtless approbation' which some of the less enlightened and more 'empty-minded' of their 'orthodox' brethren had bestowed upon it. To all such it is enough to say, that as they have certainly not fulfilled the two essential conditions which alone could enable them to accomplish the task undertaken by the author of 'Ecce Homo,' so they are

in no position to criticize his work ; and their manifest misunderstanding of his meaning in almost every particular does but afford, to use their own words, a 'melancholy evidence of their slight acquaintance with their faith and their Bibles.'

But, thirdly, supposing this great difficulty also overcome, and the Gospel narrative apprehended as a historical reality standing in organic connection with the circumstances and feelings of the Jewish people at the time of Christ's advent, there yet remains another scarcely less formidable one in the application of this history to the circumstances and feelings of our own times. To regard the Good News of God exclusively as a thing of the past, however vividly its relations to that past may be realized, however keenly appreciated may be its importance, is as seriously to misjudge it, as to ignore the past and regard it only as a thing of the present. In the latter case, no doubt, the only sure foundation for right understanding is neglected, and so the superstructure in many parts unstable and unsound ; but in the former there is simply no superstructure at all,—a diligent exploration, indeed, and restoration in idea of ancient ruins, but no building rising out of them adapted for present needs. No, if the mission of Christ be admitted as true at all, it must clearly be studied according to its claim, as related not to that time or that people only, but to all time and all people, and especially (as being the most forcible and practical view for us to dwell on) as related to modern exigencies, the circumstances and feelings of the nineteenth century. Beginning with the past for surety's sake, we must go on boldly and fearlessly to the present, or our labours do but issue in empty words and bright but useless pictures.

Now to do this involves qualifications of no ordinary kind. Hitherto the inquirer has been engaged only in examining the evidence and elucidating the meaning of the Gospel records ; ascertaining their letter, and tracing out from that their inner spirit ; a sharply restricted subject, the materials for the investigation of which are simple and (comparatively) little liable to abuse or misunderstanding. But now he is called upon to apply what he has thus learnt, to leave the letter altogether, and holding only to the spirit to launch forth into new fields, and affirm after what manner the spirit will develope itself there, what forms it will assume, what fruit produce. Plainly therefore there is needed for this concluding stage of the investigation, first a keen discerning mind that can detect the spirit everywhere in its most radical and essential form ; second, a free and sympathetic grasp of this essential character, such as may enable the investigator to predict with certainty its proper working in every case that may arise. To both these requisites there is opposed the excessive, nay almost superstitious reverence, prevalent among the orthodox, for the letter of Scripture. Forming out of

their own heads, their own ideas of what was right and necessary, a theory of the Divine origin and character of Scripture, to which the Written Word itself affords no countenance whatever, a theory not of inspiration but of dictation, they have attached to the particular words of Holy Writ a Divinity which they were never meant to bear, and too often thereby missed or misapplied the Divinity that is truly theirs. The distinction between letter and spirit these theorists ignore or absolutely deny, with them letter is spirit, and spirit letter. To state old truths in new forms not found in Scripture, except of course such (a goodly number) as are current among themselves; to trace out the temporary and transitory elements in Scripture teaching, except again in a few inexorable cases; to explain spiritually what they have been accustomed to regard literally: this is, say they, unsettling dangerous, irreverent, or even blasphemous. It will frequently happen, indeed, that the spiritual instinct of such will lead them really to do unconsciously those very things which they condemn in others, and so be practically better and wiser than their creeds; but it is plain that for anyone who desires systematically, and for the benefit of others, thus to expound and apply the spirit of the Bible as distinguished from the letter, all such notions as these, of Divine dictation or unalterable form, must be put aside, and a true *inspiration*, working through human channels, and for special temporary ends, be recognised instead.

The mere rejection of an antagonistic theory like this, however, is very far from being sufficient to ensure the accomplishment of the end desired. The great desideratum, without which the exactest views of inspiration are nothing worth, and with which even those who err on this important topic may often do the work better than their more correct brethren who are without it,—the great desideratum is a living sympathy with the truth for which they seek, and which they wish to apply; in respect to that particular subject now under discussion, therefore, in brief a Christ-like spirit. He who has this, who can look upon the state of the Jewish nation in some measure as Christ looked on it, and who can hence sympathetically discern His meaning and His purpose in every act and word, he alone can sever the spirit from the letter without risk or fear. And this living sympathy with Christ the author of 'Ecce Homo' has in a very remarkable degree. That he should be free from the hindrance of prejudice as to the literal Divinity of Scripture is what everyone would have expected in one who had been a doubter. But that, far beyond this, he should have attained to that keen and enthusiastic appreciation of the spirit of Christ which so notably distinguishes his book, could far less certainly have been predicted, and is a proof that he has long since passed from the region of doubt into that of faith. To quote the words of one of its orthodox critics, 'Ecce Homo'

'Is full of valuable and suggestive thought, great power of dealing with the practical side of moral questions, and an infinite and most unaffected sympathy with all that is noble, generous, and self-devoted.'—*Literary Churchman*, February 24th, 1866.

- In a word, it is full of the spirit of Christ. And yet this is the book of which it was said, at a recent popular meeting at Exeter Hall, that it was 'the most pestilential book ever vomited from the jaws of hell.' And this by one of the leaders of Christian philanthropic effort, re-echoed a few days afterwards in the same place by a noted Evangelical minister! Alas, that the professed servants and ambassadors of Christ should have so little in common with their Lord as thus to describe a work which breathes so richly with His spirit. Yet is it scarcely to be wondered at; for did not He Himself expressly forewarn His disciples that as teachers of religion had 'called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of His household?' The independent thinker now-a-days, who stands aloof from party forms and phrases, and the outward conventionalities of religion, and holds fast by Christ, and Christ only, must always expect such treatment from the modern Pharisees, even as Christ from the ancient. It is one of the signs of the free spirit of truth that is in him, that he gets it.

In considering these difficulties which beset the path of an inquirer into the origin and primitive character of Christianity, and the way in which the author of 'Ecce Homo' has overcome them, we have really drawn out also its most notable positive peculiarities,—the adaptation of its method to meet the wants and guide the steps of doubters, and its immense power of vivid realizing exposition both historical and practical. Properly to appreciate these, however, it is necessary to study somewhat more in detail—1st, the plan of the book, the order in which the investigation is carried on; and—2nd, the particular development of some of its more important steps.

First, then, of the author's plan. Regarding Christ's mission, according to His own and the Baptist's express declaration, as essentially to establish an universal Kingdom of God upon earth, he divides his inquiry naturally into three parts:—1. The *founding* of that Kingdom, or the Call of Christ. 2. The *legislation* of that Kingdom, or the duties imposed upon its members in their relations to one another. 3. The *administration* of that Kingdom, or the relation subsisting between its subjects and its Head. The first two only of these parts are here discussed, the third is reserved for another volume.

In considering the Call of Christ, our author, after briefly alluding to the preparatory work of John the Baptist, and the introductory episode of the Temptation, inquires in the first place into the meaning of the term 'Kingdom of God,' as elucidated by the past history of the Jewish nation; then passes on

to the current Jewish anticipations concerning it at the time of Christ's advent, and shows how Christ, while disappointing these, yet really fulfilled the true character of King in a far deeper and grander way than they had looked for. This naturally leads on to the nature of Christ's credentials, upon which He founded His claim to Kingship; the means He used in attracting loyal subjects and excluding others; and the conditions necessary to be fulfilled by those who were minded to throw in their lot with Him; concluding this part of his inquiry with a sketch of the essential character of the Kingdom thus established, as contrasted with other apparently similar human societies. Then, in respect to the Legislation of Christ, he commences with a general view of Christ's method of dealing with evil as distinguished from that pursued by other legislators and philosophers; proceeding then by gradual induction from the nature and extent of this Kingdom to elucidate the fundamental principle of its legislation:—the love for man *as man*, or as he calls it, the 'Enthusiasm of Humanity,' which each man is to have in himself, and which is to be his guide and lawgiver in every relation of life and every circumstance in which he may be placed. Lastly, he traces out the practical development of this principle, in the outward ordinance which symbolizes it, and the *kind* of acts to which it leads, so passing up to its more special manifestations in the Law of Philanthropy, the Law of Edification, the Law of Mercy, the Law of Resentment, and the Law of Forgiveness; concluding with a brief summary of the results of the investigation thus far, and some remarks on the historical effects of Christ's mission in attaining the end desired.

Such is a bare outline of the plan of 'Ecce Homo.' Its breadth, simplicity, and symmetry will recommend it at once to every impartial critic; while its extreme naturalness, causing each successive topic spontaneously to suggest, and irresistibly to lead on to the next, forms one of the great charms the book possesses for the ordinary reader. The main question, however, is: is it true?—is this the order in which we ought to consider the mission of Christ to appreciate it aright? Now, as already hinted, it is a great mistake to suppose that there is only one way in which the truth of Christ can be regarded, but one aspect under which it can be viewed. To apprehend it fully it is absolutely necessary to regard it in many ways, and under many aspects. At the same time there is *one* view of it which, for the reasons before noticed, must always occupy the first place, which is moreover the only one exactly suited to fulfil our author's object,—the view of Christianity, namely, which is unfolded in the life and teaching of Christ Himself, as being that by which the Kingdom was actually founded, and preparation made for its extension over the whole world. The question, therefore, resolves itself into this: does this plan adopted by the author of 'Ecce

Homo' accord with the course of development observable in the Gospel history?

One notable difference is patent at once:—there was not in the historical original that sharp division between Call, Legislation, and Theology which characterizes our author's plan; rather all three ran on side by side. This kind of difference is, however, plainly inevitable to every systematic course of investigation, and cannot, therefore, be regarded as involving anything worthy of censure, except it can be shown that the system here adopted is more discordant from the original than others, or leads to any very serious misapprehension; since that systematic views of Christ's mission are lawful and profitable, we suppose no one will be prepared to deny. Many, for example, would prefer to commence such an investigation with a consideration of human sin, its origin, nature, and effects; proceeding next to those deeds of Christ on our behalf which were designed to bring about its removal; then tracing out the duties He imposes, and the help He promises to His redeemed, for their further spiritual growth; and only in conclusion regarding them in their corporate capacity as a Church or Kingdom; which also might be a very useful order for certain purposes, yet, even its warmest advocates must admit, just because systematic not exactly *the* order actually observed by Christ. Others might adopt a different order still. What we have to inquire, therefore, is not whether this or that system accords perfectly with the historical development, that being on the face of the matter impossible; but which system accords with it best, which represents its spirit most exactly?

Thus regarded, we do not hesitate to affirm the plan pursued in 'Ecce Homo' to be on the whole the truest and correctest possible. Nothing can be plainer to any unprejudiced reader of the Gospels, at all events the synoptic ones, than that the first step in Christ's work was the proclamation of His Kingdom, the call to men to come into it, the exhibition of His credentials, the assertion of His authority, and the portrayal by parables of the character and manner of working of the Kingdom in its various stages. Nothing can be plainer than that the second great characteristic of His early ministry, intermingling with the first, but still starting of necessity somewhat later, was the unfolding of the righteousness, the morality, required of those who came to Him; partly by words, as in the Sermon on the Mount and other discourses; partly by deeds, in His loving conduct towards the poor and sinful and afflicted. It is only in exceptional and isolated cases, as especially in the discourses recorded by St John, that matters strictly theological come into prominence; that is, until towards the close of His ministry. These are facts easily ascertained and of great importance. In proof of them we would say, let any one thoroughly master the ground covered by the argument

of 'Ecce Homo' so far as at present developed, and then take up the first three Gospels and carefully peruse them with this end in view, and he will be surprised how little there is in their earlier portions which he can fairly say the author has not taken account of. True, there are deeper meanings in many of the particulars treated of, which for the present are overlooked, there are also those exceptional passages just noticed; but a careful inspection will convince him that, as regards these, the greater part were not understood at the time by those who came in contact with them, and so while extremely valuable as showing how completely the mission committed to Christ was realized by Him to its full extent from the very beginning of His ministry, they yet have little or no bearing upon the subject in hand, as having had scarcely any influence on the actual development of His kingdom in these earlier stages. To place the great truths connected with Christ's death and resurrection, then, before His call and moral legislation, however justifiable for other purposes, would be in a historical inquiry like that undertaken in 'Ecce Homo' essentially misleading. In the development of Christianity by Christ himself, and still more in the apprehension of it by His first disciples, these truths held a secondary position, being either not taught at all at first, or, if taught, yet taught for the time without effect. Had our author, therefore, done what some critics would have had him do—taken Christian theology first and Christian legislation afterwards—he would have gone directly in the teeth of that history which he professed to regard as the sole foundation and guide of his investigation. As it is, he has followed that history as closely and accurately as a systematic course would allow, representing its spirit exactly, if differing somewhat from its letter.

But at least, it may be said, he has been compelled for this end to ignore altogether the teaching of the fourth Gospel, and is thus working with 'mutilated materials.' Granted he has done so; the reasons for which have been already sufficiently set forth, in the temporary ineffectiveness of the discourses there recorded, and the doubts entertained by many now-a-days as to their authenticity. There is another deeper reason yet, however, which is worthy of consideration for a moment, as bringing out still more forcibly the justice and value of our author's plan. It concerns the difficult problem of the origin of the first three Gospels. A careful examination of the divergences between these, both in their records of events and reports of discourses, proves that they were composed quite independently of each other; while at the same time the patent similarity in scope and matter, and still more the many minute accordances in phraseology, which this same examination discloses, prove equally beyond doubt that they drew their information to a great extent from some common source. Rejecting rightly all those elaborate

schemes of editing and re-editing of original Gospels, which an earlier school of critics devised to account for these phenomena, modern scholars are now pretty well agreed that the only adequate explanation is the existence of a primitive *oral Gospel*, a regular course of evangelic teaching adopted throughout all the churches on Apostolic authority, which was taken by the three earlier Evangelists as the foundation for their narrative. This oral Gospel, having been in use many years before they wrote, would naturally have acquired a certain fixedness of general form and uniformity of expression, mingled, however, with much variation in minor details, such as would account very simply for the phenomena observable in our present Gospels; while the special information possessed by each individual writer would explain the occurrence of passages peculiar to any one out of the three. Now, if this be the true solution of the problem, as we doubt not it is, it follows of course that the matter *common* to these three Gospels may be taken as fairly representing to us the character and form of that teaching in respect to Christ's life and mission, which Apostles thought it well as a general rule to set before their converts. A most important conclusion; for herein is implied, first of all, that they regarded that gradual apprehension of the truth, which they had themselves experienced, as the most suitable also for their converts; second, that for this purpose they thought it good to begin, not with the birth of Christ, the incarnation, but with the commencement of His public ministry, His appearance as a man among men, and even then not to proceed at once to the crowning doctrines of theology, but first to lay the basis well and carefully of His call and legislation, so working up to the others step by step; third, and especially, that for this purpose also they did *not* consider the discourses afterwards recorded by St John as equally well adapted with the narratives of miracles, parables, and moral sayings, which form the bulk of the earlier three; the profounder views of St John were reserved for a period in their teaching still more advanced than even that which dwelt on the death and resurrection of Christ. If, then, we at the present day, in dealing with the instruction of inquirers, new believers, or other children in the faith, would follow the example of the Apostles of old, and take their inspired wisdom as our guide, it is plain that thus also must we do—first lay the foundation in the call and moral legislation of Christ, and then build on this the superstructure of theology; first the milk, then the strong meat. Thus it is that the author of 'Ecce Homo' has laid his plan; concerning which we may say, therefore, that, putting aside those divergences which result inevitably from the adoption of a systematic course, it is a plan which represents at once the order in which Christ Himself unfolded and displayed His work, the order in which Apostles and Evangelists apprehended and believed in

it, and the order in which thereafter they thought good to instruct their converts also. Higher praise than this we know not how to give.

One only regret we have on this score, and that is, that we have not the entire plan worked out before us at once. The fulness of thought and richness of illustration with which the author of '*Ecce Homo*' has dealt with the present portion of his subject, the comprehensive grasp with which he has seized its salient features, and the delicacy of touch with which he has filled in the details, more by allusion and suggestion than distinct statement, the freshness and originality of his mode of treatment, the eminently satisfactory and ennobling character of his results, all combine to make us long earnestly for the completion of the work, the masterly handling which we may reasonably expect of those still more difficult and keenly disputed topics yet to come. Then, again, the publication of this part alone has exposed the writer to an immense amount of misunderstanding and hostility, which at least would not have had so much colour of foundation on which to base its virulence had the whole work been before the public eye at once. Not that we imagine that any further development of the author's plan would have saved him from one iota of the abuse and invective which have been so plentifully showered down upon him by narrow-minded bigots. The very idea of the book, the utter unconventionality of its style and method, whatever its results might be, were quite sufficient to arouse the fierce hatred of these sole possessors of infallible-truth. Of course it was '*revolting*,' '*painful*,' '*lamentable*;' its author a rationalist, a Socinian, an infidel—what else could one expect? It is not for the sake of these, therefore, that we regret the partial publication of this work, but rather for those simpler better spirits who, startled by the novelty of the book, and in doubt as to its tendency, are liable to be misled by the rantings of these vindictive demagogues into a false and evil opinion concerning it, which may not a little mar its usefulness. On the other hand, it must not be overlooked that for those to whom it is especially addressed, the anxious, the troubled, the doubters, it is on the whole better that but part is published at first, that so the true and unexceptionable foundation of Christian faith may be laid in their hearts deeply and firmly ere any attempt be made to erect that to which they are most likely to take objection, the superstructure of dogmatic theology. Perhaps, therefore, all things considered, our author acted not unwisely in making a pause, we trust, however, not too long a pause, between these different sections of his book.

We pass now to a few illustrative examples of the details of the book. And, firstly, of the author's treatment of Christ's claim to Kingship, and its relations to the anticipations on that head current among the Jews. The first thing to be determined

is the character and form of that earlier Kingdom of God which the Jews recognized as constituting the basis of their whole past history, and which Christ claimed to re-establish and fulfil.

"Every Jew looked back to the time when Jehovah was regarded as the King of Israel. The title had belonged to Jehovah in a very peculiar sense; it had not been transferred to Him from the visible earthly king as in many other countries, but appropriated to Him so exclusively that for a long time no human king had been appointed, and that when at last the people demanded to be ruled by kings like the nations around them, the demand was treated by the most ardent worshippers of Jehovah as high treason against Him. And though a dynasty was actually founded, yet the belief in the true royalty of Jehovah was not destroyed or weakened, only modified by the change. Every nation of originality has its favourite principles, its political intuitions, to which it clings with fondness. One nation admires free speech and liberty, another the equality of all citizens; just in the same manner the Jews attached themselves to the principle of the Sovereignty of God, and believed the happiness of the nation to depend upon its free acknowledgment of this principle. But in the time of Christ all true Jews were depressed with the feeling that the theocracy was in a great degree a thing of the past, that they were in a new age with new things about them, that Greek and Roman principles and ways of thinking were in the ascendant, and that the face of the Invisible King no longer shone full upon them. This feeling had become so deep and habitual, that at a much earlier time the sect of the Pharisees had been formed to preserve the peculiarity of the nation from the inroad of foreign thought, and whatever ancient Jewish feeling remained had gathered itself into this sect as into a last citadel. In these circumstances the cry, 'The kingdom of God is at hand,' could not be mistaken. It meant that the theocracy was to be restored, that the nation was called to commence a new era by falling back upon its first principles." (Pp. 19, 20.)

The sketch here given of the course of Jewish thought on this subject is afterwards worked out more at length, the relation between Jehovah and the specially selected leaders of the earlier times, and then between Jehovah and the hereditary monarchs, being traced with the author's usual skill, so as to bring clearly into relief the reasons which induced Christ to select the latter rather than the former as the fittest symbol of His 'Divine Royalty.' This visible Kingship of a Son of David was also that which ancient prophecies had led the Jews to expect as the special characteristic of the times of the Messiah. So far, then, Christ's claims and Jewish anticipations coincided. It was on the nature and practical work of this revived Kingship that the difference arose.

"The religious Jews were looking for the appearance of one who should be neither more nor less than David had been. They expected, it seems, to see once more a warrior-king judging in the gate of Jerusalem, or surrounded by his mighty men, or carrying his victorious arms into the neighbouring countries, or receiving submissive embassies from Rome and Selucia, and in the meantime holding awful communication with Jehovah, administering His law, and singing His praise." (P. 26.)

In a word, they fixed their thoughts exclusively upon the letter of the old earthly kingdom; Christ, on the other hand, had His mind intent upon the spirit of the heavenly original, of which

that had been but a faint and partial representation. This heavenly Kingship included in it three several offices, two only of which had ever been delegated to human representatives, and those but in part. First, there was the Call, whereby the chosen family had been constituted a peculiar people, whose distinguishing characteristic it was that God was their King. This Jehovah had done by Himself once for all. Second, there was the Legislation, given to the people chiefly through the instrumentality of Moses, and since regarded as 'final and unalterable.' Third, there was the Administration, carried on in part 'by commissioned judges appointed from the people and inspired by Him with the necessary wisdom;' in part by His own providential dealings; or still more, according to the clearer conceptions of later times, by His judgments in the unseen world to come.* Only as governors and administrators could the hereditary kings of Israel be considered representatives of Jehovah; Christ claimed to be His representative in all three respects. He was at once 'the Father of an everlasting state,' as Founder of the Christian Church; 'the Legislator of a world-wide Society,' superseding the Mosaic code and promulgating 'a new one on His own authority;' and the Judge of mankind, 'holding His assize in that mysterious region which had recently become visible to men on the other side of death.' But claiming these, the highest prerogatives and true essentials of Royalty, He at the same time renounced entirely those outward acts which the Jews had been accustomed to regard as constituting its very substance. He made no effort to restore national independence, but rather owned the justice of the tribute paid by Jews to foreign rulers; He declined all magisterial and judicial functions, even when cases, criminal and civil, were pointedly submitted to Him for decision; He owned no force, no army, to maintain His authority and execute His plans, declaring such support and agency inconsistent with the true character of His Kingdom. Hence arose the perplexity, and at last the rejection of the Jews. They expected a revival of the past in greater splendour and dignity; He was working out a 'new and unprecedented' development for the future. Thus 'He confounded their calculations, and professing to be the King they expected, He did none of the things which they expected the King to do;' and further, let us add (which the author also implies, but does not distinctly state), He *did* those things which they had never expected the King to do. This was their grievance. A King after their own heart, sitting upon the throne of David, surrounded with pomp and splendour, subjugating nations and levying tribute, reverent to the law and respectful to its teachers—such an one they would

* The same three divisions, it is to be noted, as those adopted by our author in the development of his own argument; another striking proof of its innate and many-sided propriety.

have welcomed. A homely Prophet, proclaiming the revival of the Theocracy in a more spiritual form, giving larger and deeper scope to ancient laws, and propounding new ones suited to the special circumstances of the times; denouncing hypocrisy and vice, and pointing on to future judgments at the hand of God,—such an one they might have tolerated. But that one should come in semblance as a Prophet, yet with the name of King; should claim to be the Messiah, yet run counter to every hope and expectation they had formed concerning Him; should accept the proffered homage of the multitude as Son of David, and yet, rejecting all that David did, all the lawful and proper representation of their Divine Monarch which was connected inseparably with that name, should rather claim an office and position above David, above Moses, above Abraham, equal with God;—this was not only disappointing and repugnant to every thought of their heart, but appeared presumptuous, treasonable, blasphemous;—such an one must die.

Such is the view of Christ's claim to Kingship, considered in its relation to current Jewish anticipations, which the author of 'Ecce Homo' sets before us in his chapters on 'the Kingdom of God' and 'the Royalty of Christ.' In one point only can we say that his working out of the details is defective; and that is his omission, already hinted at, of the positive side of Christ's claim as a ground for His rejection by the Jews. Taken strictly, our author's expressions would seem to imply that the Jews crucified Christ merely because, while claiming the title of King, He exercised none of the prerogatives of Kingship which they considered essential; whereas it is plain that this was not all, but that rather their gravest charge was that He exercised, or at all events claimed, prerogatives which they considered inconsistent with His office. The omission was a natural one, as the paragraph on the rejection precedes in 'Ecce Homo' the chapter on Christ's Royalty, where His real claims are discussed; we are disposed also to think it to some extent an unintentional one, and that the author, full of his subject as a whole, scarcely saw how one-sided in this particular his statement was. Be this as it may, however, there certainly is an omission here, and a grave one, which has exposed him to serious and not unmerited blame. Fortunately the omission in no way affects the author's argument, the rejection of Christ's Kingship by the Jews being merely introduced by way of episode between the sections on their anticipations and His claims, both which are unexceptionably and grandly worked out.

Hostile critics, however, have not been content with pointing out the real defect just noticed; they will have the author wrong also in the very foundation of his position. It is altogether a mistake, they say, to make Christ's claim to Kingship the first and most essential feature of His mission, for 'until His last

entry into Jerusalem our Lord did not openly acknowledge that He was a King.' Those who came in contact with Him in public had no idea that 'He put forth regal pretensions,' but thought Him to be 'Elias, Jeremias, or one of the Prophets.' Christ had no mind then to be owned as King, for when they sought to 'take Him, by force and make Him a King,' He avoided them. A 'public claim to the character,' at this period, 'would undoubtedly have been made the pretext of a charge before Pilate.' Amazing criticism! What, have our thoughtful 'orthodox' critics, so deeply acquainted 'with their faith and their Bibles,' so richly stored with 'the comments of learning, genius, and piety, for upwards of eighteen hundred years,'—have these actually forgotten the testimony of John the Baptist to Him who should come after, mightier than him, whose shoes' latchet he was not worthy to unloose, who should purge and winnow and burn, whose was the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire; which coupled with his proclamation that the Kingdom of God was at hand, and his own pointed denial of the Messiahship (the very thing, indeed, which gave rise to this reference to One yet to come),* could surely leave no doubt on the people's mind who heard him that it was Messiah the King of whom he spake?—have they forgotten the direct personal testimony which John bore to Jesus, as the One of whom he had spoken, the Bridegroom, the Heaven-sent, the Son;† the message which he afterwards sent to Christ for the satisfaction of his disciples, and the answer returned to him, 'Blessed is he, whosoever is not *offended* in Me?'‡—have they forgotten the reception which that testimony of John met with among his own disciples, how they went and told one another that they had 'found the Messiah,' and owned Him even then as 'the Son of God,' 'the King of Israel?'||—can it be that they have lost sight of the meaning to Jewish ears of those titles, which, they admit, Christ assumed or allowed to be applied to Him, 'Son of Man,' 'Son of God,' 'Son of David,' 'Holy One,' 'Lord,' titles in use from the very beginning of His ministry, and which were all undoubtedly regarded as characteristic of the Messiah, whom certainly no Jew ever regarded as other than a King?—is it possible that they have overlooked the stress everywhere laid by Christ in His teaching upon the Kingdom of God as now actually come, the authority with which He spoke of who should enter into it, plainly referring to Himself as the Holder of that authority, the visible Head and Founder of it? But space would fail to sum up even briefly the mass of evidence existing in the Gospels on this head, not only in the later sections, but quite as much in those earlier portions of the history to which this most profound and 'reverent' criticism refers. No doubt the Jews did not admit the claim, but either

* Luke iii. 15-17; John i. 19-27.

† Matt. xi. 2-15, &c.

† John i. 15, 29-34; iii. 25-36.

|| John i. 41, 45, 49.

rejected Christ altogether, or regarded Him simply as a Prophet; but this was merely, as already shown, because He was not the *kind* of King they looked for. But that at the same time they recognized that He Himself claimed to be something more, is plain from the fact that they were in continual controversy among themselves as to this very point, whether He were the Christ or not;* that they asked Him 'If thou be the Christ, tell us *plainly*,' to which He answered, 'I *told* you, and ye believe not;† that they sought to 'take Him by force and make Him a King,' *i.e.*, a King after their own heart, which He avoided plainly, not because He would not have them think of Him as King, but because He was not and would not be *such* a King as they would fain have made Him. The further objection, that if He had thus claimed to be King at the very beginning, He would have been accused sooner, rests in like manner upon a total misconception of the spirit of His accusers, whose malignity arose, not from the bare fact of His assuming a certain title, but from His not agreeing with them as to the proper attributes belonging to that title, and from the fear that if they let Him alone His view and not theirs would be realized in fact. It was not until His antagonism to them was fully developed, and His success among the people at the same time becoming imminent, that they resolved finally to take His life. While their reason for choosing this ground of accusation in bringing Him before the Romans at last was doubtless because they knew that His claim to Kingship had been so essential and fundamental a part of His teaching all along that He could not and would not attempt to deny it; while the crowds that had hailed His entry as King into Jerusalem would give colour to their insinuation that it was an anti-Roman Kingdom He sought to erect, that He was seditious and dangerous.‡ Of those, then, who refuse in the face of such evidence to acknowledge that Christ's claim to Kingship was the foundation, open and avowed, of His mission on earth from the very beginning, we can only say, to use their own strong, but in this case most apt expressions, that they 'pervert the commonest particulars which lie on the surface of the Gospels,' and that 'it would be difficult to name a writer who more completely sets facts at defiance.'

As an illustration of the detailed working out of the second part of 'Ecce Homo,' that namely on Christ's legislation, we select the chapter on 'Positive Morality,' which forms the turning point between its inductive and deductive sections. The author has been tracing out the fundamental idea of Christ's legislation—the 'Enthusiasm of Humanity,' or love for man as man. He has shown in the first place wherein Christ's method of raising mankind to a state of moral perfection, the great prac-

* John vii. 26, 27, 31, 41; ix. 22, &c. † John x. 24, 25.

‡ Luke xxiii. 2-5; John xviii. 33-37.

tical aim, as he rightly says, of His mission, albeit according to one of his reviewers an object 'infidel' not 'Christian,'*—wherein Christ's method of doing this differed from the two great types of philosophic teaching, 'Stoical apathy' and 'Epicurean indolence.' Then, in order to bring out its complementary positive character, he proceeds to consider the kind of duties necessarily imposed upon His subjects by the very constitution of His Kingdom,—a 'brotherhood founded in devotion and self-sacrifice,' a brotherhood which, unlike all social or natural brotherhoods, was universal in its extent, embracing all ranks and tribes, and cutting at the root of all that hatred and ill-feeling which severed man from man. The general character of the duties belonging to Christians as citizens of such a state—unselfishness, being thus apparent, he dwells in the next place on the character of the legislation by which they were defined; showing that, again unlike all other legislators, Christ did not care to set down with minute exactness each particular duty He considered right to be performed, but contented Himself with insisting upon the inward principle, the motive, which alone could enable His followers to fulfil these duties, and which would also itself lead to their discernment,—the principle of enthusiastic attachment, or in ordinary phraseology *love*. Then he discusses the various obstacles which presented themselves to the existence and activity of this enthusiasm in the extent and fervour which Christ required, and the way in which these obstacles might be mitigated or overcome; also the incitements to such love which sprang from the personal character of Christ, and afterwards, in a less degree, of His disciples and imitators. The question now arises, if this unselfish enthusiastic attachment or love to man as man was thus the root and essence of Christ's legislation, the inner lawgiver which each man was to bear about in himself, and which he was to cherish and increase by every means in his power,—if this were so, what was the practical result?—wherein did Christ's legislation differ, as regards effects, from other legislations, and especially that earlier one established on Divine authority among the Jews? The answer to this question occupies rather more than a third of the book, being worked out with great fulness of thought both as to principles and practice. The chapter we have selected for special consideration deals with the matter in its more general aspect, as to what *kind* of difference there was, in practical effect, between Christ's legislation and the Mosaic system which it superseded, and the relation which they consequently occupied towards one another.

In the first place, then, our author says Christ's legislation was a system of freedom, Moses' of restraint; inasmuch as the one

* Vide *Quarterly Review*, No. 228, p. 517, 'A Church of which the ultimate object was the improvement of morality would not be Christian but infidel.'

consisted in the inculcation of an inward governing and law-giving principle, the other in the enactment of a series of definite and exact commandments. Hence the critical spirit in which Christ and His disciples regarded the Jewish law, 'as something of which they were independent, and with which they could dispense,' alarming as such criticism must have been to many 'honest, cautious, conservative spirits' at the time. The principle on which they thus criticised, and held themselves to be free from, the law, is described in these words :

"It was the inspiration, the law-making power, that gave Christ and His disciples courage to shake themselves free from the fetters even of a Divine law. Their position was a new and delicate one, and nothing but such an inspiration could have enabled them to maintain it. To pronounce the old law entirely true or entirely false would have been easy, but to consider it as true and Divine, yet no longer true for them, no longer their authoritative guide, must have seemed, and must seem even to us, at first sight, unnatural and paradoxical. It may be illustrated, however, by what every one has observed to happen in the process of learning any art. For the beginner rigid rules are prescribed, which it will be well for him for a time to follow punctiliously and blindly. He may believe that under these rules a principle is concealed, that a reason could be given why they should be followed; but it is well for a time that the principle should remain concealed, and that the rules should be followed simply because they are prescribed. At any rate, so long as he has not discovered the principle, he must abide strictly by the rules, and it would be foolish to abandon them in order to go in search of it. But there comes a time when the discovery is made, a golden moment of silent expansion and enlargement. Then the reason of all the discipline to which he has submitted becomes clear to him, the principle reveals itself and makes the confused and ill-apprehended multitude of details in a moment harmonious and luminous. But the principle, at the same moment that it explains the rules, supersedes them. They may not be less true than before; they may be seen to be true far more clearly than before. But they are obsolete; their use is gone; they can for the future tell only that which is already well known, which can never again be forgotten or misunderstood. If the student refers to them at a later time, it is with a feeling of wonder that they should ever have delayed his attention for a moment; and probably in the rude and peremptory particularity of their form, he may discover that which, though well enough adapted for the beginner under certain circumstances, is yet in itself not true, and is calculated under other circumstances to mislead." (Pp. 183-4.)

Then, in the second place, Christ's legislation differs from Moses' inasmuch as the one is mainly positive, the other negative. Moses sought to restrain the evil passions of men, to prevent them from running into open violence and sin, and keep them from the neglect of plain and manifest duties. Christ sought to urge them on to higher and before-unthought-of virtue, and especially to self-devoted labour for the good of others. In part this change arose, as already hinted, from the advance in the education and civilization of the race. The times had changed, and 'laws which in the earlier time the best men had probably found it hard to keep, could now serve only as a curb upon the worst.' In part it arose from the transcendent influence of the 'life and example of Christ,' in the light of which

even the 'more advanced morality' of 'the later books of the Old Testament' appeared 'narrow, antiquated, and insufficient.' Christians were to pass altogether beyond this,

"from a region of passive into a region of active morality. The old legal formula began '*thou shalt not*,' the new begins with '*thou shalt*.' The young man who had kept the whole law—that is, who had refrained from a number of actions—is commanded to do something, to sell his goods, and feed the poor. Condemnation passed under the Mosaic law upon him who had sinned, who had done something forbidden—the soul that sinneth shall die;—Christ's condemnation is pronounced upon those who had not done good. 'I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat.' The sinner whom Christ habitually denounces is he who has done nothing." (P. 186.)

How this distinctive characteristic of Christ's teaching was manifested also in His life, and what effect that manifestation had on those who watched it, is thus set forth:

"It may sometimes strike us that the time which Christ devoted to acts of beneficence and the relief of ordinary physical evils might have been given to works more permanently beneficial to the race. Of His two great gifts, the power over Nature, and the high moral wisdom and ascendancy over men, the former might be the more astonishing, but it is the latter which gives Him His everlasting dominion. He might have left to all subsequent ages more instruction if He had bestowed less time upon diminishing slightly the mass of evil around Him, and lengthening by a span the short lives of the generation in the midst of which He lived. The whole amount of good done by such works of charity could not be great, compared with Christ's powers of doing good; and if they were intended, as is often supposed, merely as attestations of His Divine mission, a few acts of the kind would have served this purpose as well as many. Yet we may see that they were in fact the great work of His life; His biography may be summed up in the words, 'He went about doing good;' His wise words were secondary to His beneficial deeds; the latter were not introductory to the former, but the former grew occasionally, and, as it were, accidentally out of the latter. The explanation of this is, that Christ merely reduced to practice His own principle. His morality required that the welfare and happiness of others should not merely be remembered as a restraint upon action, but should be made the principal motive of action, and what He preached in words He preached still more impressively and zealously in deeds. He set the first and greatest example of a life wholly governed and guided by the passion of humanity. The very scheme and plan of His life differed from that of other men. He had no personal prospects, no fortune to push, no ambitions. A good man before had been understood to be one who, in the pursuit of his own personal happiness, is careful to consider also the happiness of those around him, declines all prosperity gained at their expense, employs his leisure in relieving some of their wants, and who, lastly, in some extreme need or danger of those connected with him, his relations, or his country, consents to sacrifice his own life or welfare to theirs. In this scheme of life humanity in its rudimentary forms of family feeling or patriotism, enters as a restraining or regulating principle; only in the extreme case does it become the mainspring of action. What with other good men was the extreme case, with Christ was the rule. In many countries and at many different times the lives of heroes had been offered up on the altar of filial, or parental, or patriotic love. A great impulse had overmastered them; personal interests, the love of life and of the pleasures of life, had yielded to a higher motive; the names of those who had made the great oblation had been held in honour by succeeding ages, the place where it was made pointed out, the circumstances of it proudly

recounted. Such a sacrifice, the crowning act of human goodness when it rises above itself, was made by Christ, not in some moment of elevation, not in some extreme emergency, but *habitually*; this is meant when it is said, He went about doing good; nor was this sacrifice made for relative, or friend, or country, but for all everywhere who bear the name of man.

"Those who stood by watching His career felt that His teaching, but probably still more His deeds, were creating a revolution in morality, and were setting to all previous legislations, Mosaic or Gentile, that seal which is at once ratification and abolition. While they watched, they felt the rules and maxims by which they had hitherto lived die into a higher and larger life. They felt the freedom which is gained by destroying selfishness instead of restraining it by crucifying the flesh instead of circumcising it. In this new rule they perceived all old rules to be included, but so included as to seem insignificant, axioms of moral science, beggarly elements. It no longer seemed to them necessary to prohibit in detail, and with laborious enumeration, the different acts by which a man may injure his neighbour. Now that they had at heart as the first of interests the happiness of all with whom they might be brought in contact, they no longer required a law, for they had acquired a quick and sensitive instinct, which restrained them from doing harm. But while the new morality incorporated into itself the old, how much ampler was its compass! A new continent in the moral globe was discovered. Positive morality took its place by the side of negative. To the duty of not doing harm, which may be called justice, was added the duty of doing good, which may properly receive the distinctively Christian name of charity." (Pp. 187-9.)

We have quoted our author's own words thus at length because of the very serious misconstruction to which they have been subjected by his detractors. His remark as to the different form of Christ's and Moses's commandments, 'thou shalt not' and 'thou shalt,' introduced plainly merely as an illustration, is construed into a dogmatic statement, and elaborately refuted by the production of instances where the opposite forms are used; as if the distinction drawn were one of the letter, instead of, as it is, exclusively one of the spirit. In the same way it is assumed, that because our author calls Christ's legislation distinctively positively, therefore he intended to imply—1st, that there was no negative element whatever in it; 2nd, that all previous legislations had been exclusively negative; and a so-called refutation is again set up in the proof—1st, that Christ also, equally with Moses, condemned the transgressors of prohibitory laws; 2nd, that some positive laws similar to Christ's existed already in the earlier legislation. Whereupon the judgment is pronounced, that the author of 'Ecce Homo' 'commits an outrage against revelation and undermines its foundations.' The real state of the case being, as every-unprejudiced reader of the book will have seen, that the author repeatedly insists upon the *inclusion* of the old legislation in all its essential particulars in the new, merely pointing out the lighter stress which is laid upon it owing to the advanced position now taken up; that so again he distinctly admits the germs of a higher morality discernable in the Old Testament, and especially in the writings of the Prophets, refusing however rightly to regard them as more than

germs, whose full development was reserved for Christ. Practically and characteristically the old legislation had been one of prohibition; distinctively, therefore, the new legislation may well be regarded as one of positive morality, a demand for a righteousness *exceeding* that of Scribes and Pharisees. To deny this is indeed to 'commit an outrage against revelation and undermine its foundations.' The 'want of candour' and 'grave misrepresentation of facts' which has dictated such criticism 'deserves the severest censure.'

The two instances of detailed working out which we have thus reviewed may be taken as fair samples of the general character of the book, and the way in which the main argument is developed. Of the comprehensive grandeur of the original, however, taken as a whole, no sketch, no sample instances, can convey any adequate idea. Nothing but a studious and reiterated perusal by the individual reader can furnish that. One point more there is, however, which should be noticed before passing on to other matter. It would be a great mistake to suppose the value of the book to consist only in its elaboration of a particular plan, however excellent that plan may be, however admirably worked out. Over and above this there is also a vast store of suggestive thought upon other cognate matters, alluded to in passing, or introduced by way of episode. We select a single instance, the chapter on the Temptation.

How full of suggestion is the very way in which this is introduced, not, as we are too apt to regard it, as an isolated and peculiar event, parted off sharply from the general history of Christ, but as intimately connected with that history, arising naturally out of what had transpired just before, and leading on naturally to that which immediately followed. Christ was on the point of entering upon His life-work, His public ministry; the signs connected with His baptism had made known to His fore-runner that He was the Messiah; the Spirit had descended upon Him which was to lead Him to the fulfilment of His mission; and by this Spirit He was impelled to fly for a time into the desert. Whatever knowledge He may have had ere this concerning His work, whatever yearnings to be engaged upon its accomplishment, it could not but be that, even as when He approached the terrible end of all, and saw that imminent and near which He had so long contemplated from afar with steadfast gaze,—even as then His spirit quailed, He was in agony and conflict, so here, when the work for which God had sent Him lay right before Him in all its fulness and practical difficulty, it could not be but that for a season He should be agitated and full of anxious weighings of His future course. He had not been perfect man had it been otherwise. His forty days of earnest contemplation, eating and drinking nothing, which ended in that final conflict with the spirit of evil which we call the Temptation, was

the natural fruit, then, of the descent of the Spirit upon Him in power at His baptism.

Then as to the Temptation itself. Part of this vivid appreciation of the mission opening out before Him consisted without doubt in the consciousness of being possessed of unlimited supernatural powers; part also in His conviction of being One supremely and infinitely favoured by God; part, once more, in His regarding Himself as now *de jure* universal monarch. Precisely on these three points did temptation assail Him. To use these supernatural powers for His own personal comfort and temporary advantage; to presume upon His favour with God, and vaunt it openly before the wondering people; to adopt evil courses to attain immediate possession of His kingdom;—these were the suggestions of the spirit of evil that rose successively into view and were successively repelled by the unselfishness, humility, and holiness of Him who was assailed. The conflict over, His course henceforth was clear. To use these powers, not for His own benefit, but in doing good to others; to walk in lowly guise, glorifying His Father, and waiting patiently for the time when His Father should see fit to glorify Him; to reject all evil instruments and agencies which might suggest themselves as calculated to advance His cause, and in lofty purity and integrity of heart to erect the Kingdom of God upon foundations wholly righteous;—this was His resolve, from which He never swerved.

Such is the view of the connection and inner meaning of Christ's Temptation, which the author of 'Ecce Homo' suggests to our minds by his remarks. We say *suggests*, for as a complete exposition of the event we must regard his observations as decidedly partial and defective; in part, we conceive, unintentionally, from their very brevity, and the early part of the argument in which they occur, where the writer is especially desirous to keep clear of debateable matter; in part, however, also, we apprehend from the tendency of our author, already noticed in another instance, to fix his attention too exclusively upon a single point generally overlooked, and so lose sight of others of equal importance. In the present case we should say that he is defective, firstly, in that he confines himself too exclusively to Christ's new-born consciousness of supernatural powers, instead of extending the idea to the other characteristics of His mission; in that, secondly, when speaking of the evil agencies suggested to Christ by Satan, he limits his view to one only—force, whereas the idea would manifestly apply as well to guile, passion, sensuality, or any other of the devilish methods which might suggest themselves as useful means wherewith to acquire universal supremacy, and which were, equally with force, rejected and refused by Christ; in that, thirdly, he exaggerates the notion of Christ's conflict as arising from His 'fresh conviction' of Messiahship,

as if He 'now for the first time' became 'conscious of miraculous powers,' whereas we should rather regard it as a fresh conviction merely from His imminent nearness to the work involved in that Messiahship. Regarded as exposition proper, then, this chapter on the Temptation is certainly very defective, though full of the most valuable suggestions; a remark which will apply also to very much of the other episodal matter in 'Ecce Homo.'

Far harsher, however, has been the judgment of our author's principal critic. According to him this view of the Temptation is a 'lamentable theory' 'only consistent with some of the lower grades of Socinianism,' the argument by which it is supported is 'the weakest imaginable,' its propounder 'avowedly modifies facts' in order to maintain it, while 'conjecture is piled on conjecture, and the sure foundation of Scripture is converted into a shifting sand.' The grounds on which this criticism is founded are chiefly two, 1st, that whereas 'the Evangelists relate that our Lord was tempted from without by the devil, and that the instant the temptations were offered they were spurned; the author of 'Ecce Homo' maintains that the temptations were generated in the mind of our Lord Himself, and that He passed through a stage of mental hesitation before He subdued them;' 2nd, that whereas the Evangelists say 'that our Lord was solicited by the devil to worship him,' the author of 'Ecce Homo' says that 'He was tempted to do something which on reflection appeared to Him equivalent to an act of homage to the evil spirit.' Both objections are easily refuted by a truer appreciation of our author's meaning, and a reference to Scripture teaching in general. To assert that the author of 'Ecce Homo' teaches that the temptations were 'generated' in the mind of Christ, is simply a falsehood; he merely says that they *arose* there, and in arising laid hold of certain thoughts and anxieties then present to Him which gave them their force as temptations. Now this is merely saying that the temptations were real. Scripture tells us plainly that Christ was tempted 'in all points after the like manner' as we, though 'without sin;' and especially insists upon the *suffering* which this temptation brought with it, as a ground for our confidence in His sympathetic help.* Mere solicitation to evil does not, however, involve any suffering to a holy nature except that of repugnance, which could plainly be no cause of sympathy with those who *are* in danger of falling, but rather the contrary. Therefore the temptation of Christ must have been something more; a solicitation to evil, in fact, which laid hold of certain natural and lawful desires existing in His breast, and offered to satisfy them; whose rejection would involve, therefore, also the subjection of these desires, and so suffering; such suffering too as would naturally lead to sympathy with others similarly

* Heb. ii. 18; iv. 15, 16.

circumstanced, but in whom the desires were liable to get the upper hand.* Precisely so was it with this great Temptation. Christ was hungry, was desirous of food; and at once the temptation was suggested of satisfying this desire in an evil way. He rejected the suggestion, declining 'to use for His own convenience what He regarded as a sacred deposit committed to Him for the good of others;' but in so doing He suffered, for the appetite of hunger had thereby to be subdued. It was a real temptation. Had He not been hungry it would have been no temptation at all. So again He was desirous that men should recognize Him as the Son of God; He was desirous of attaining speedily to the Kingship of the world; desires in themselves equally just and lawful with that of food; and forthwith the temptation came to procure these ends also in evil ways. Each time He rejected the thought, but still each time undoubtedly not without suffering, not without an effort, because the desires which these temptations laid hold of had thereby to be subdued. The rejection may have been as quick, as thorough, as unhesitating, as thought can conceive; still, being the rejection of a real temptation, not of a mere solicitation to evil, conflict and struggle for the moment there must have been, or, as we said before, Christ was not perfect man. And this is exactly what the author of 'Ecce Homo' insists upon, and no more.

This same likeness of Christ's temptation to ours suggests also the answer to another part of this first objection. "We also, Scripture teaches, are tempted by this spirit of evil; but how? By a visible form uttering audible words in our ears? No, but by the insinuation of thoughts in the heart; thoughts, as John Bunyan well describes it, often mistaken by the Christian for his own. After the same manner, then, no doubt, was Christ tempted; the suggestions of the evil one came not to the ear, but to the heart, and so for the moment at least mingled with His own pure and holy thoughts. To bring which home to modern minds it is plainly necessary to describe these suggestions as *arising* in the mind of Christ, in it though not of it. To those, on the other hand, who were in the habit of speaking of all communications from the unseen world as *sayings*,† whether audible or not, the Evangelist's expression, 'the devil saith unto Him,' would equally convey this purely spiritual manner of temptation, as our more exact, 'the devil put this thought into His heart.'

Then, with respect to the second objection, the homage asked by Satan. Surely the great matter in all worship is, not the outward act of prostration, but the inward spirit of allegiance; 'to whomsoever we yield ourselves servants to obey, his servants we are

* See this question of the sympathy of Christ to temptation exquisitely worked out in a Sermon by the late Rev. F. W. Robertson. Vol. I., No. 7.

† Acts viii. 26, 29; xiii. 2; xxi. 11, &c.

to whom we obey,' ay, and his worshippers too. No one imagines that any of the Gentiles actually bowed down to their own bellies, and yet St Paul says of them 'their God is their belly,' because *that* they served. So precisely would every one who obeyed and served the spirit of evil be rightly called a worshipper of the devil. And if, as the author of '*Ecce Homo*' reasonably assumes, the account of the Temptation was derived by the disciples from Christ himself, we can well imagine that He who called all things by their truest names, even to designating an evil-suggesting disciple '*Satan*,'* would speak unhesitatingly of the suggestion to adopt wicked means to attain His kingdom as neither more or less than a demand to 'fall down and worship' the devil.

We pass by many other passages in '*Ecce Homo*' on which we could willingly have dwelt, as replete with profound and original suggestions on divers topics, and proceed to touch briefly in conclusion upon the theological tone of the work, and upon its style.

Wary as the author has been to avoid all theological questions as irrelevant to his present subject, it could not but be that, in dealing with the matters which he has, he should have given some clue, and dropped some hints, as to his more strictly theological views. And very eager have many inquisitive readers been to gather up these hints, and form conjectures as to who the author may therefore probably be. The wonderful variety of the conclusions thus arrived at is sufficient proof how well the author has in fact kept clear of debateable theology. He has been reputed to be High, Low, Broad, and what not else. Our own impression is that he is neither; but that, as hinted at the beginning, he is one of those, who, having been brought through doubt to a more living apprehension of the realities of truth than ordinary, is raised above parties altogether, and can afford to look down upon and do without the pet phrases and conventional forms which these have coined to represent their favourite and characteristic views. And this is very much confirmed by the striking, at times almost startling, resemblance in thought and spirit which we have noticed between this book and the writings of one of our most eminent modern divines and teachers, the late Rev. F. W. Robertson of Brighton. Were we not well assured, and painfully aware, that Mr Robertson had passed away from our midst, now thirteen years ago, we should have said, unhesitatingly, Mr Robertson is the author of '*Ecce Homo*.' It may be that our author has drawn to some extent upon his writings in the construction of his own work; and yet the nature of the resemblance scarcely suggests this as the most probable explanation. There

* Matt. xvi. 23.

is not the slightest appearance of borrowing anywhere; the likeness is deep, not superficial. It rather seems to us that it is due to both having passed through the like struggle of mind, and both with the same happy result. They are cognate souls, and so have cognate views. A thought which still further enhances our confidence in the rich treasure-store of deep and simple truth to be expected in our author's second volume. Among the more salient points of theology which are to be found directly or indirectly developed in the present part, we would especially allude to the author's firm and unflinching grasp of the true and perfect humanity of Christ, so often now-a-days neglected practically by the so-called orthodox, and his clear conception of Christ's mission as essentially to establish a Society, a State, a Kingdom, not merely, as too many are apt to regard it, to save and help isolated individuals.

With respect to the style of 'Ecce Homo,' not much need be said. Its eloquence, its lucidity, its nervous simplicity, must be sufficiently apparent to every not very deeply prejudiced reader. But there are two further characteristics which have given occasion to not a little of the misapprehension to which the book has been subjected, and which, therefore, it may be worth while to say a word upon,—its freedom, and its freshness. The author of 'Ecce Homo' is not one of those who weigh out every word and sentence with exactest care, and seek to qualify and fence round every, even the minutest statement, lest but the shadow of a wrong construction should perchance be put upon it. On the contrary he boldly dashes on, says what he thinks freely and strongly, and trusts to his readers' sympathetic discernment and honour not to misunderstand him. Never careless of his mode of expression, he is, at the same time, never cautious to avoid possible misconstruction. Hence it naturally follows that where he does not meet with sympathetic discernment and honour he is continually liable to be censured for saying things which in fact he never said at all, since what he did say was never meant to be taken in the sense his critics put upon it. To take a single instance. Twice in the course of his remarks on Christ's legislation has he had occasion to cite His famous answer to the lawyer touching the great commandment of the law, and each time he has given it in full (pp. 145, 151). A third time he cites it, when dealing exclusively with the manner in which Christ inculcated the duties of man towards man, and then naturally omitting the part irrelevant to this special topic, says, 'To love one's neighbour as oneself was, He said, the first and greatest law' (p. 156). No fair and intelligent reader could misunderstand this, and yet the passage (ignoring, of course, the existence of the other two) has been quoted as an instance in which the author, with 'his ordinary disregard for facts,' flatly

contradicts the Gospel narrative. Many other similar examples might be given; it may suffice, however, to remark, that if this unappreciative literal criticism be just, certainly there is no book so open to its assaults as the Bible itself, the freest spoken and least cautious of all books. Then as to the characteristic of freshness. All along it has plainly been an object with the writer to keep clear of conventional terms and phrases; and this, it would seem, for two reasons—1st. Because thereby the essential nature of the facts and truths spoken of are far more likely to be felt and realized by ordinary readers.—2nd. Because the use of received dogmatic expressions was sure to arouse antipathy in the minds of those for whom the book was specially intended, and was unsuited to an inquiry where nothing theological is supposed to be taken for granted, but each point is severally and successively determined on proper evidence as it rises. This view of the matter will also account for the greater warmth of the language in the latter part of the volume as compared with the former, the advanced stage of the argument naturally occasioning a corresponding advancement in tone of expression. We need scarcely add, that in both particulars, its freedom and its freshness, we apprehend the author of 'Ecce Homo' is to be praised rather than blamed. Had he been more cautious, and above all more 'correct' in his style and phraseology, he might indeed have escaped some little of the criticism he has been subject to, but his book would have been far more marred than mended by the change, its usefulness been essentially impaired.

For, looking back on the work as a whole, it seems to us that among its many great and noble characteristics there is none more worthy of especial notice than this:—it is pre-eminently a *useful* book. Faults it has, no doubt, some that we have pointed out, others that space has forbidden our entering upon;* but with all its faults we know of no work on the life and mission of Christ at all comparable with it, so far as it goes, for intense practical usefulness; usefulness in plan, in details, in spirit, in style, in everything, usefulness to all kinds and classes of men. To the studious Christian and the Minister of the Word it is full of the richest and most suggestive thought, expressed in the freshest and most telling form. To the ordinary reader, caring little, it may be, for Christ or religion, there is a charm, an attractiveness about it, that is sure to secure and rivet the attention, while its fervid enthusiasm and practical earnestness cannot but make it a powerful incentive to higher thoughts and better deeds. And yet for neither of these classes do we suppose

* See especially the great blot of the book, the attempted limitation of Christ's prayer of forgiveness on the cross to the Roman soldiers only,—Pp. 277-8.

the book was primarily intended by its author; in neither of these has it its highest meed of usefulness. It is when we come to those who were especially in view when it was written, the honest doubters, the conscientious sceptics, who long for truth and have it not, whether those just struggling with the first waves of doubt, or those grown weary and desponding with a long and unavailing search—then it is that its real surpassing usefulness is brought to light. Its plan, its style, its method, above all, the view of Christ which it sets forth, are all exactly what they need. And as they read it they will feel:—here, at last, is a guiding sympathizing hand to help, here at last a dawning light in darkness, a cheering hope of peace and rest, a glimpse of heaven. In the knowledge of the benefit it has conferred on such as these must be, we should imagine, the deepest source of gratification which the author of ‘*Ecce Homo*’ has in looking back upon his hard-wrought labour. Let men say what they will, he has done a good work in Christ’s cause and in Christ’s spirit, a work which shall assuredly be richly blessed here and hereafter.





